Oxygen deprivation at birth could increase risk of cardiovascular disease

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Despite the relatively high risk, the absolute number of babies who suffer from cardiovascular disease despite asphyxiation at birth is very low. After the 30-year follow-up period, only 0.3% of those with asphyxia-related complications had a cardiovascular diagnosis, compared with 0.15% of those without complications.

Since the study was observational, the researchers are unable to establish any causality or propose any underlying mechanisms.

**Largest risk increase for stroke and heart failure**

The study followed more than 2.8 million individuals born in Sweden between 1988 and 2018, of whom 31,419 suffered asphyxia-related complications at birth. A total of 4,165 cases of cardiovascular disease were identified during the follow-up period. The increase in risk was particularly salient for stroke and heart failure, as well as for atrial fibrillation. The researchers took into account potential confounders such as birth weight and maternal lifestyle.

"Even if the absolute risk of cardiovascular disease is low at a young age, our study shows that asphyxia-related complications at birth are associated with a higher risk of cardiovascular disease later in life," says the study’s corresponding author Neda Razaz, assistant professor at the Department of Medicine, Solna, Karolinska Institutet.
